(b) whether the Foreign Investment Promotion Board (FIPB) has given its approval for the said project; and

(c) if so, in what manner various companies and corporations are proposed to participate in this venture?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

(c) The information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

Divers engaged by ONGC for off-shore Operation

634. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMACHANDRA REDDY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of divers engaged by the ONGC for off-shore operations;

(b) the nature of duties that those divers perform;

(c) whether many foreign divers have been hired recently by the ONGC at much higher wages, than those being paid to the Indian divers; and

(d) if so, the reasons for hiring foreign divers and paying higher wages?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) ONGC Ltd. has not directly engaged any divers for its off-shore operations. The Corporation engages the services of reputed and experienced Diving Agencies on contract, strictly based on need.

(b) to (d) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

कच्चे तेल पर लगाया जाने वाला उपकर

635. श्री राम जेठमलानी: क्या प्रधान मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार का ध्यान 4 जनवरी, 1997 के "दि फाइनेंशियल एक्सप्रेस" में "मिनिस्ट्री आरक फार मॉर फण्ड्स फ्रोम आयल सेस एकाउंट" शीर्षक से प्रकाशित समाचार की ओर दिलाया गया है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो क्या यह सच है कि सरकार द्वारा कच्चे तेल के उत्पादन पर उपकर के माध्यम से प्रति टन 900 रु० के हिसाब से वसूली की जाती है; और

(ग) यदि नहीं, तो तत्संबंधी तथ्य क्या है?

पेट्रोलियम और प्राकृतिक गैस मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री टी० आर० बालु): (क) दिनांक 4 जनवरी, 1997 के फाइनेंशियल एक्सप्रेस के दिल्ली संस्करण में ऐसा कोई समाचार प्रकाशित नहीं हुआ है।

(ख) यह सत्य है कि 900/-रु० प्रति टन की दर से उपकर वसूल किया जाता है।

(ग) प्रश्न नहीं उठता।

Private LPG Distributors in Punjab, Haryana and H.P.

636. SHRI MOHINDAR SINGH KALYAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) the number of LPG distributors of private sector oil companies functioning in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh as on the 31st January, 1997;

(b) the total number of consumers registerd with these companies;

(c) the number of registrants in the waiting list; and

(d) by when all the registrants in these States are likely to get LPG connections?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (T. R. BAALU): (a) to (d) During February 1993, Government had permitted, under the parallel marketing scheme, private entrepreneurs to import and market LPG, using/setting up their own infrastructure and distribution network, at market determined prices, under their own terms. Private parties are not required to obtain any licence from the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas for undertaking activities under the scheme. They are, however, required to

obtain approvals/clearances under the relevant Acts and Rules regarding safety, pollution control, etc., as applicable. The private parties are also now required get themselves rated from one of the approved rating agencies and submit the rating certificate to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and other concerned.

Under the Parallel marketing scheme, private parties are free to have their own marketing, distribution and pricing policies i.e. complete freedom regarding selection, appointment of their dealer/ distributor network etc., the number of customers to be enrolled and whether to maintain a waiting list for release of new connection or not. Such details are not available with the Government.

Decline in the growth of Petroleum production

637. SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) to what extent Government's projection for the growth of output of petroleum products showed decline during 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96;

(b) what are the major causes for the fall in the projected output;

(c) the comparative rise in the import of petroleum products during the above period following the fall in the anticipated domestic production;

(d) what is the comparative rise in the cost of petroleum products imported during the above period and its overall bearing the Oil Pool Cess, in terms of comparative deficit; and

(e) whether Government propose to review their policy to make it more objective in making the country self-reliant in petroleum products?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) to (e) There has been no decline in production of petroleum products during 1993-94, 1994-95 and 1995-96. Quantity and value of import of petroleum products depends upon the overall demand, indigenous production and prices prevailing in the international market. In order to contain oil import bill steps are being taken to increase refinery capacity in the country by expansion of existing refineries in public sector and setting up of refineries in joint sector and private sector. Steps are being taken to increase crude oil production in the country through application of improved technologies, development of new fields, additional development of existing fields and by inviting foreign/private capital in the upstream sector.

Effect of Price Hike of Petroleum Products

638. DR. D. VENKATESHWAR RAO: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the hike in diesel, LPG and petrol has created resentment amongst people in the country;

(b) if so, whether the price hike has affected other sectors also and almost all of them have been demanding increase in prices of their products;

(c) whether Government have calculated its impact on other items; and

(d) if so, to what extent?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) The price increase in July, 1996 was necessitated to contain the deficit in the Oil Pool Account and thus enable the oil companies to maintain uninterrupted supply of petroleum products in the country.

(c) and (d) It was estimated that the direct impact on the wholesale price index on account of increase in prices of petroleum products would be around 0.9%.